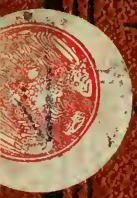

A Wayside Flower

and Other Poems

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PS 1470 Copyright No.

Shelf .C4

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A Waysido Flower.

A

Wayside Flower,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

CHARLOTTE LENNOX.

"Happiness is a wayside flower, growing on the high road to usefulness."

BALTIMORE:
PRINTED BY KELLY, PIET & CO.
174 W. Baltimore Street.
1875.

PS1470
.C4

Entered according to an Act of Congress, in the year 1873, by
KELLY, PIET & CO.,
in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

Kelly, Piet & Co., Balto.

TO

SEVERN TEACKLE WALLIS,

OF WHOSE

Professional Eminence and Literary Graces,

THE

MEN AND WOMEN

OF MARYLAND,

Are Alike Justly Proud,

THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

Charlotte Lennox Crisfield.

A Wayside Flower..... 1
The Thistle Seed.....36
The Old Manor House.....40
The Wizard Loom.....44
My Lady Fair.....48
A Storm Among the Sand Hills of Colorado.....50
Tired Out.....56
Out of the Way.....58
Failure and Compensation.....61
Mohammed Ali and the Apple.....64
Am I Glad.....67
Welcome to Winter.....69
Song—Nay, Crown Me Not.....71
A Barn Yard Row.....73
The Mistletoe.....75
Folded Hands.....77
My Hammock.....78
She Came From Heaven.....80
My Little Queen.....82
Three Phases.....83
The Magnolia.....85
Song—I Pray Thee Drop.....87
She Wore a Cloud.....88
Unrest.....90
Go Thou Thy Way.....92

A WAYSIDE FLOWER.

"Happiness is a wayside flower, growing on the high road to usefulness."

KNEELING there in silent anguish, all her
frame convulsed with grief,
Gaze we with a tender pity, where we can-
not bring relief.
Scarcely turned of fourteen summers—less of woman
than of child—
Old in sorrow she must needs be, to have learned a
look so wild.
Not in youth can one great trouble sadden thus the
mobile face,
Many and persistent trials there have been to leave
such trace.
"O, God!" she cries, "In mercy hear me! Why
should life be dark like this,

When my own heart tells me daily that the world is
full of bliss!
'Tis not that I long for riches—life alone is wealth
for me—
While in veins so young and healthful bounds the rich
blood wild and free.
But I must have love, O, Father: human hearts are
more than stone;
Send it me in kindliest pity, ere I be quite callous
grown."
Falling white in feathery showers, apple-blossoms,
pure and pale,
Fell on hair and brow and bosom, decking her in
bridal veil.
If prophetic of the future, all unheeded was it now,
As she stooped with hands outstretching to enlave her
burning brow.
Kneeling there with tresses flowing, in a little nook
she spied
Sweet Spring violets early growing, sheltered safe from
wind and tide.
"I will pluck them," cried the maiden; "even heart
so hard as hers
Must be softened somewhat towards me, when she sees
these and my fears."
Then with face of curious mingling, hope and fear so
strangely blent,
With a weary step, and lagging, homeward through
the fields she went.

Coming to the garden paling, wistful looks she casts aside,
And in spite of vain endeavor, cannot all her tremblings hide.
Dwells within some hideous monster waiting for his hapless prey,
That she dreads to cross the threshold while she stands awhile to pray?
Ah! for hearts so young and tender, days of dragons are not done;
And their numerous snares and pitfalls work from morn to set of sun.
"Mabel!" cries a voice, whose sharpness tunes her throbbing nerves to pain,
"Loitering feet make lazy beggars, prithee why so late again?
What! those flowers for me, you tell me! Put them in the crystal vase;
They had bloomed full long, I'll warrant, if you'd left them in their place.
Wash the children's hands and faces; see that they are neat for tea;
And be sure your task is finished, and as neat as neat can be."
"So," groaned Mabel, "she can pity even the violets' early doom;
But for me a tender feeling in her heart can find no room."

Fifteen moons have sunk and risen, since by little babbling brook,
Mabel culled the early violets sheltered safe within their nook.
Fifteen moons of blighting sameness to the girl whose tortured heart,
Craved with eager, feverish longing, in the world to play her part.
Had a father lived to shield her—train her bright untutored mind,
Which, in warmth and quickness growing, far outstripped the summer wind—
Bent and pruned the glorious branches, bound them to the parent tree;—
All unfelt the eager longing, but to be untrammelled—free!
Had a mother lived to yield her tender loving, without stint,
Silver might have turned to golden—priceless treasure from the mint.
Orphaned early—she had fallen into busy, tireless hands;
Hands that toiled, and rested never, working hard for house and lands.
Worth their weight—these human engines, never known to tire or stay:
Ceaseless driving all around them from the early peep of day;

But too hard for finer natures; her's was made of purer clay;
And in all this coarser tumult, she must wilt or run away.

Mental food was at a discount in this house of virtues stern,
And for sympathetic nature, Mabel's spirit sorely yearned.
In the months since last we saw her, childish fear has turned to hate;
Stands she now, in budding beauty, at the little lattice gate.
Voice may call as sharp as ever; Mabel will not answer now,
Save with slightly shrugging shoulder and a cold, averted brow.
Youth hath followed fast on childhood—Mabel looks the woman grown:
Oft the bud we leave at nightfall in the morn a rose hath blown.
Poor pale rose! whose drooping petals, drenched by night's too copious show'rs,
Only need to flush with beauties, one of daylight's glowing hours.
Quick the dawning! O'er her features flashes sunlight born of love:

Is her anguished prayer, then, answered by the pitying
Heaven above?

From beneath the deepening shadows, comes a youth
of noble mien;
Scarce you'd wonder at her loving, if the vision you
had seen:
Quick she flies to greet his coming—eyes look love to
eyes again;
Out of sight and all forgotten, sink past years of toil
and pain.
Roses bloom in myriads round them, lilacs breathe of
early love;
All earth's fairest prospects bound them, and the sky
bends blue above.
What to her the cold discomfort she has known
throughout her life!
In her dreams she sees another, with sweet love and
blessing rife;
Vine-clad cot and rustic bower; dreams whose vague-
ness make more sweet:
In the life she now is leading two extremes of feeling
meet:
Loathing for the tortured childhood, sweet forgiveness
of the past;
For when one's supremely happy, how can hate or
malice last?

Life is sweet when love has crowned us, and we ask
of fate no more,
Than to leave us where love found us, with our full
cup brimming o'er.

In the dim, uncertain twilight of an evening soft and
gray,
When the shadows seem coquetting with the fading
beams of day —
From a mansion, tall and stately, with its windows
open wide,
And a porch where sweet clematis tangles up on every
side;
Steals a figure through the gloaming with a shy and
nervous haste —
Is it some forbidden pleasure she has stolen forth to
taste?
She has seen scarce eighteen summers, and a childish
look of dread
Mantles o'er the lovely features as she droops her
queenly head.
It may be some eye hath marked her as she stole
adown the stair,
With her little paper parcel and her shining tresses
bare.
Not the old romantic ladder with the beating heart
below,

Waiting there to clasp his jewel, gliding down the rounds so slow.
Ah! that sweet romance hath vanished with the age that gave it birth,
And elopement at the present, savors strong of woe and dearth;
For the age is realistic, and a lover worth the name,
With a goodly share of fortune, or a promise of fair fame,
Does not need to plead his passion on an unfrequented street,
But may lay his pledges boldly in the eyes of all they meet.
Yes, the days of lordly castles and of towers tall and grim,
Whence the maiden waved her kerchief and kept watch alone for him;
When a theft was something noble, if a heart were but the prize,
And a courtship doubly piquant if 't were hedged about with lies—
They have vanished, and a bridal to command the world's applause,
Must conform to all its notions and be governed by its laws.
What's a bride without a trousseau but an everyday affair!
A pea-fowl shorn of plumage has a very sorry air:

And where a dame once needed but a single silken gown,
A girl must now have twenty, or be sneered at by the town!

Something doubtless of this feeling stirred within the culprit's heart,
Although she scorned to own it, and held boldly to her part.
Hark! is that a foot-step? and she glides into a run,
Keeping well within the shadow every passer-by to shun;
Till beneath an ancient gateway she is clasped so close and warm,
That no room is left for tremblings, and she dreams no more of harm.
"My darling, oh! my darling, do you give yourself to me?"
And he clasps her slight frame closely, and he clasps her tenderly.
"Yonder, in the ivied Chapel, stands the Priest to make us free."
"He is waiting for us, dearest; and I, only wait for thee."
So, in the gathering darkness, mate these birds of early spring;
Scarce waiting to be full-fledged ere they're off, and on the wing.

Like the birds, they think hereafter to provide their
humble nest;
Its fair walls will rise by magic; or, if not, she hath
his breast.
No reminder of the adage, that a bride should have
the sun;
And the shades have fully gathered ere the Priest has
made them one.

Billows kiss the sands and vanish — flowerets blossom
but to fade;
Nature's sweetest things are frailest — sunshine's fol-
lowed soon by shade.
One by one illusions leave us; and more blest, per-
chance, are they
Who have seen their treasure perish ere it met the
noontide ray.
As the babe we lose in childhood ere its faults are
giants grown,
Memory decks with rarer virtues than the flowerets
fully blown,
So the love that left us moaning, ere its hues had time
to fade,
Fancy clothes in brighter colors than the one our life
has made;
And the passion early stifled, though it bring us
sharpest pain,

Lives in all its fair proportions safe from earthly spot
or stain.

Days, and weeks, and months had vanished: autumn
gathered in her store,
And the eyes so sweetly tender, saddest look of yearn-
ing wore.
Who that e'er has knelt in anguish o'er a hope too
early dead,
But can weep in tender pity for this sorrow-laden head.
Like a flash of glorious sunshine on a gloomy, dripping
day,
To her inmost depth of being love had quickly won
his way.
Won his way with shout and laughter, tinting all with
roseate hue —
Decking earth in richer colors, making summer skies
more blue.
Now, the clouds had sullen gathered, and the sun had
ceased to shine,
And the tempest brooded darkly over oak and clinging
vine.

How or why the change befell, boots not now for us
to tell,

But with hearts that pity sways, follow Mabel's winding ways.
She had thought her life complete, dreamed of every blessing sweet,
Sure to be her very own, now her heart seemed turned to stone.
Why had he so careless grown! she had loved him none the less—
Then she'd shrink, lest viewless spirits should have heard her heart confess.
Was it that in these short months she had grown less pleasing fair?
And her eye the mirror sought with a troubled, questioning air;
And her haughty head would straighten—none must know how ill she fared:
Never yet the world had pity for the heart before it bared.
What if love had lost its sweetness! life had other gifts in store:
She would seek for mental riches—search the world for varied lore.
Many a woman, 'reft of loving, had begot a world-wide fame:
She would set the nations ringing with the music of her name.
Only they who've loved and suffered know to touch the heart's deep springs;

Now, as in the days of Eden, wider range sad wisdom brings.
But, alas! these stern resolvings melt into a milder mood—
Fell despair must sweep the harp-strings ere a woman's muse be wooed.
And sweet Mabel, sad and heart-sore, still had gleams of heavenly hope—
Lower still the clouds must darken if her mind would find its scope.

Gracious Heaven! she had seen him toy with locks of golden hue:
Twine them gently 'round his finger—sun himself in eyes of blue.
Had her own he praised so lately lost their glossy nut-brown shade?
Were her eyes, so dark and melting, dull beside this airy maid?
Tush! The mirror plainly told her that her bloom was none the less:
She must probe the mystery deeper—force her tortured heart to guess.
She had read in moments stolen from her short and busy life—
Nay! had *heard* that maids once wedded were not always loved as wife.

She had deemed it but a fable; or, if men *could* be so base,
It was but to common vessels—was she not a porcelain vase!
He had sought her from the moment that their eyes as strangers met.
She had used no tangled meshes, spread not one coquettish net.
He had been at pains to win her; looked the very soul of truth;
How should she, the child of nature, see beneath it woe and ruth!
He had vowed to keep him only unto her while life should last—
Share with her his tiniest joy; shelter her from every blast.
Did he think because he gave her name and home and daily bread—
Kissed her when the mood was on him, smoothed her simply braided head;
That the heart himself had wakened, satisfied with meaner things,
Could content it with the body when the soul had taken wings!
Out upon the faithless craven! he should know as he was known;
Careless of her, he should find her stony as a statue grown.

Cold and gray each morning fell, and the days were
dark as well.
Children's laughter shrilly jarred; sunshine mocked
her tortured soul;
From her very birth ill-starred—born to trouble and
to dole—
Oh, she had been mad to dream! Happiness was not
for her:
God had given this passing gleam just to make the
rest more drear.
How had she so deeply sinned, more than all the world
beside?
Only to a hardened criminal, endless trouble should
betide.
Would her dreary round of sameness ne'er had known
this flash of light!
When the lightning transient glimmers, darker grows
the brow of night.

Softly! tortured heart, be still! Bow thee to thy
Saviour's will!
Not in wrath, He sorrow sends; but in pitying mercy
bends;
Tells each throb that wrings thy heart—marks each
pearly drop that falls;
And, in tones of pitying love, low the blessed Saviour
calls.

Cast thy broken troth behind thee! look up with the
eye of faith!
All above, beside, around thee, springs new life from
out of death.
Ask not why the gourd is smitten; bear the burden of
the day;
Hopeful tread the arid desert—flowers will spring
along the way.

You have seen in early autumn, when the ripened fruit
is done,
Second bloom of snowy clusters sparkling in the
mellow sun;
All unmindful of the leaden skies a few more weeks
may bring,
Decking all their shrivelled branches with the buds
of early spring:
Melancholy in their beauty, spending all their sap in
vain;
For the winds of early winter soon will rend the buds
in twain.
So with Mabel. From the harvest, strewn so thick
with blinding tears,
There had budded yet another: recompense for all her
fears.
Fairest hope that Heaven can send! Beat against her
throbbing heart

What might prove her purest joy, or might point still keener dart.
What if Fate shot unrelenting, poisoned arrow from her string,
And, 'neath guise of new-born blessing, copy of the father bring!
How she shudders at the fancy! Heaven guard her from such fate! —
Lest the hope in its fulfilment should arouse a world of hate.
Might she greet a tiny daughter, hope and joy would bloom anew;
And in her — her special treasure — cease to mourn her love untrue.

Bending o'er her new born blessing — noting each small cherub grace;
See the smile like daylight dawning, stealing slow o'er Mabel's face!
Not e'en all the pain attendant on this mystery of birth,
Nor the shadows which have darkened life for this frail child of earth,
Can efface the mother's yearnings o'er the life herself hath given:
Fate, which hath so hardly used her, yields her now foretaste of heaven.

Touching now the dimpled fingers, now the scanty
golden hair,
Kissing each incipient dimple; was there e'er a form
so fair?
Sitting quiet there beside her, noting with amused
smile,
All the mother's rapturous toying, while his own heart
throbs the while;—
Seems he like some wondering schoolboy, o'er a prize
not fairly won;
Or like prince in olden legend at a sight his senses
stun:
When as goes the olden story, he has cleft poor pussy's
head,
And, all wondrous to beholden, rises up a queen
instead.
Will he gather up the fragments with regretful, tender
pride?
Strew the sepulchre with flowerets, all the ghastly
wreck to hide?
Then with heart this wondrous mystery shall have
freed from all its dross,
Link again their lives so closely that they lose all sense
of loss?
Softly! softly! From the marsh-lands, carpet as ye
may with bloom,
Comes a life-destroying odor: all who will may scent
their doom.

Souls like these, by nature wayward, though ye chain
them for a day,
When ye deem them closest bounden, break their
bonds like smoke away.

Vain, alas! our hopes and scheming! What are we
but potters' clay?
Even the eyes so lately opened to the joyous light of
day,
Bright and blue, as were its father's, smiling up into
her own,
Brought her but a doubtful gladness: some day she
must see him grown.
Would he torture, like another, her who loved him
more than life?
Would he woo some tender maiden, making her a
wretched wife?
God forbid! She would not keep him where the taint
of sin could find;
And a project, vague and floating, formed itself within
her mind.
She had left her old surroundings scarce twice thirteen
moons before,
Proud to follow in his footsteps—all for love and
nothing more.
Why, when love had left her moaning, should she
hug the empty nest?

She would wander through the wide world with her jewel at her breast.
He, the faithless, light o' loving, let him fare as best he may!
He would scarce regret her leaving, since it left him fuller sway.
True, he still would swear he loved her, and at times so sweet would woo,
That, with woman's yielding nature, she would half believe him true:
Stifle all her inward doubting, as he'd say, with sunniest smile,
"Must I needs decry *thee*, dearest, when I praise another's style?
If I wander for a moment, gaze on all that's bright and fair,
And, in birds of other plumage, seek to know the strange and rare,—
'Tis but as the artist striving to enrich his varied store,
And from all the new and curious I return to love thee more.
As a bird on wanton pinion hies him lightly to his nest,
I, from all my fleeting fancies, rest securely on thy breast."
Thus in moods of fitful loving, glimpses of the past would rise,
Bringing happier days before her, when he lived but in her eyes:

But the chord too often sounded palls at last upon the ear;
And a bitter smile now lingered, sadder far than rising tear.

Autumn winds were sighing gently thro' close woven boughs of pine,
And the tender scarlet cypress long ago had ceased to twine.
Needles, as the children call them, made a carpet soft as down;
Richer far with oderous breathings than the bright bouquets of town.
Night was falling, soft and solemn, lighted by a single star,
When thro' all the tender quiet came a ringing sound afar.
Nothing but a doorway closing, from the cottage on the hill;
Yet the sound so sudden falling brings a dreary sense of ill;
Closing on a heart half broken, on a heated, 'wildered brain,
On the life she leaves behind her, tired, impatient of the pain;
Clasping closely to her bosom the one thing she deems her own;

'Cross the lawn and little meadow, now she nears the boundary stone;
Opes the gate with sudden clamor, shuts it with impatient hand,
Seeming lightened of a burden as she treads an alien land.
Down the narrow starlit roadway, where the shadows meeting fell—
Shadows falling all around her, crossing cheek and heart as well.
Little heeds she of the omen, chequered tho' her path may be;
But one feeling throbs exultant—once again her life is free.
Free from all the cold awakening following her short dream of bliss;
No more shall her lips be tainted with a careless perjurer's kiss.
In the red mouth nestled near her, she will cleanse her own with dew:
Working hard for him, her blessing, love and life will dawn anew.
Ah! how vainly in our blindness, human atoms as we are,
Swear to throw the past behind us, choose anew our guiding star—
Ignorant that the woof once woven cannot so be rent in twain;

And the threads that passion sever, in some form will
cross again.

Brooding! brooding! ever brooding, and the brow
once smooth and fair
Traces shows of weary waiting 'neath the glorious
waves of hair.
What, then! has the boasted freedom, that she came so
far to seek,
Left her with an altered outline and this strangely
pallid cheek?
Sure it cannot be that hunger ravages a form so fair!
No! for see yon blooming cherub, lisping low his even-
ing prayer.
"Heavenly Father, bless my mother; bless my absent
father, too—
Make me good and take to Heaven, evermore to dwell
with you."
So, then, after all her effort to forget the painful past,
She has taught her boy to love him—pray he may be
blest at last.
Out upon you, oh, faintheartedl! Do the men then
paint us true,
When they say once loved, loved always, though we
may that loving rue?
Can we never, self-reliant, choose the path our feet shall
tread?

Ah! we *may*—and so might Mabel, had the still, small voice been dead.

Bravely she had worked and striven, happiness in hope to find;
Dwelt with pride on baby's progress—watched unfold his infant mind—
Resolutely shutting from her all the past, with all its care,
Dwelling only on her darling in his boyish promise fair;
Till one day, with blue eyes widened, he had come to her and said,
"Dearie mother, where is father? Tell me, is my father dead?"
Then, with sudden sharpest smiting, she had caught him to her breast.
God in Heaven! why had she torn him thus from out the parent nest!
Why had she, like some mad courser, taken between her teeth the bit!
He might live but to reproach her: bonds of blood are firmly knit.
Why had she forgot the teaching all her life had gone to show,
That with God our future resteth—as He wills it falleth so!

If He thinks it fit to send us quiet lives and happy hearts,
We may rest without a shadow, safe from all misfortune's darts.
But if He, with infinite wisdom, closer draw the chastening band,
We must bow in meek submission, lest He lay a heavier hand.

Early memories surging, thronging from a troublous depth of soul,
One by one from memory's chambers silent to the surface stole.
Had she, then, been weakest craven, when she deemed herself most brave,
Leaving thus her cross behind her, battling 'gainst a self-made wave?
Memory drew, in vivid coloring, how, on eve of early spring,
She had mated, with the birdlings—on her hand a golden ring;
At her feet an ardent suitor; in her ear a siren song;
In her heart a boundless loving—o'er her past a boundless wrong.
Love had failed her at the outset, turned her sweetnesses to gall;
Robbed her of her sweet, confiding love—of faith, of hope, of all.

No, not all; for there beside her, flushed with roseate
hue of health,
Lay a joyous cherub cradled—sum of all her worldly
wealth.
What if he, his father's image, lived to chide her for
the wrong
She had done him in deserting! Did he not to both
belong?
Might he not, some future morning, wake to crave a
father's kiss?
Taunt her with the crime of having robbed him of a
fancied bliss?
Yet, why fancied! He had loved him, in his easy,
careless way.
Why might not that love have deepened, growing on
from day to day?
Even now he might be grieving—not for her, she
knew it well;
But for all his darkened hearthstone, and his child—
how could she tell!
She had sworn to love and cherish till e'en death itself
should part:
Was her promise only binding while she bore a light-
some heart?
Out upon her for a craven! Not thus lightly vows are
made—
Once united, one forever, be it sunshine or in shade.
She had sinned! Not hers the only darkened heart
this world had known.

Life was full of sad-eyed reapers, gathering where
they had not sown.
Gathering wheat and tares together — seeing only
darkly now,
But with hope of clearer vision if they turn not from
the plough.

List! A wail of mortal anguish! How her unloved
childhood's years,
All her silent wifely anguish, all her passionate heart-
wrung tears,
Die into the past behind her, blotted out by one great
blow:
Bows she in the gathering darkness o'er a form as cold
as snow.
Lying like a lily cradled, every roseate tinting gone,
Pure and pale as early snowdrop — child of hasty
wedlock born.
Gone the faintest trace of breathing. Now she gives a
fitful start,
As she lays her hand, despairing, o'er the almost quiet
heart.
'Tis but life's last feeble fluttering. Colder still the
fingers grow,
While the mother sinks in anguish, all too deep for
tears to know.

Draw the veil o'er days of darkness! nights of loneliness, that stare
Wide-eyed at the sleepless sufferer, peopling all the oppressive air
Thick with hideous, thronging fancies: ghostly memories stalk abroad.
Outcast by her own wrong-doing, dare she call upon her Lord?
If in path of daily duty, set her by the Master hand,
This her sorrow had befallen, then, indeed, she might demand
Comfort from a source unfailing: now she cannot, dare not pray.
Is it not a wrathful smiting that has taken her child away?
God is just as well as loving. Was it meet that she should keep
Stolen sweets? The fruits of evil soon or later man shall reap.
Vain, all vain, her long foreboding of a child like father grown.
Fool! to think that any blessing could for long remain her own.
She had gloried in her daring, proud of heart and brain as well;
Every friendly offer made her she had hasted to repel.
Now, alone, forsaken, outcast, her one bud of promise crushed,

Broods, there, o'er her stricken being pause like that of tempest hushed.
Then a rain of softer feeling — might she not be one of those
Who can only reach the haven through successive heartfelt woes?
Whom our Father loves He chastens. Ah! she sees it dimly now,
And a gleam of heavenly radiance hovers o'er her darkened brow.
She has made herself her idol, grasped at happiness below,
All unmindful that its flowerets must on duty's pathway grow.
Blind, exacting, proud, impulsive, she has thrown life's chance away;
Happier hearts are beating round her — hearts of commoner, humbler clay.
Hearts that, robbed of earlier dreamings, comfort seek on bended knees,
And, in life's sweet ministrations, find reward in hearts at ease.
She will seek, like them, a future quite distinct from out the past,
And, in paths by Him appointed, homage pay to wisdom vast.

Day is breaking! Through the grayness comes a hint of rosier gleam.

Day is breaking, earth is waking — million hearts
with gladness teem.
Down the maple-shaded roadway, where the tears of
night still lie
On the grassy border, waiting for the smile of day to
dry,
Comes, in sad and startling contrast to the bright'ning
hues of day,
Solitary mourning carriage, making slow its toilsome
way.
Passes by the wicket gateway for the wider carriage
road:
Here and there a passing teamster wonders what may
be its load.
Only one sad, pale-eyed woman, bearing on her trem-
bling knees
What remains of life's elixir: henceforth she must
drink the lees.
Through the avenue of beeches — round the now neg-
lected lawn —
Halts beside a drooping willow, and a little coffin,
borne
Gently on an alien shoulder, lowers to its earthly rest —
Not a single sob escaping from the pallid mourner's
breast.

Wedded maid, yet widowed matron! There are those
in this strange world,

Who, from some mad freak of fortune, seem predestined
to be hurled
From the rock they've sought as shelter, out again
upon the storm.
Not for them the quiet haven! Oft a seeming frailer
form
Than our Mabel's buffets bravely where a stouter
would succumb;
With a face all set with sorrow, and white lips all
stricken dumb,
Battling for a mere existence—reft of all that makes
life worth;
Yet with sad persistence clinging to the bare brown
shell of earth,
Till we wonder who are happier—that death draws
not sooner nigh;
Wonder that they do not *curse* them—curse their
Maker—turn and die!
Broken hearts! Why waste our pity on the hearts
that truly break?
Mourn for those who wake while sleeping, and who
sleep when most awake!
Broken hearts! aye, sound a pæon! as we lay them
dust to dust,
Happier than their throbbing sisters finding taint, or
gathering rust.
Waking from the sleep of ages, with the current
hardly stayed—

Leaping into life eternal! no slow raptures long delayed;
As may be with tardier natures, breaking slow through earth's cold crust;
Leaping into joy from madness, as intenser natures must.

How with Mabel? Hers a spirit neither born to bend nor break.
Souls there are whose lives are two-fold, and who from their mantle shake
All undue, untoward traces of the purifying storm:
Follows after summer showers, sunshine but a shade less warm.
What of those who die before us! There are some who would deny
Recognition of earth's loved ones in a home beyond the sky.
Perish teaching so ignoble! Lost ones meet us at the door—
Nay! "not lost," but missing rather—only gone a while before.
This the key to Mabel's future! sweet eternal rest to win;
But a few more years of labor—Christian warfare conquering sin.

Night is falling, soft and solemn, lighted by a single star,

When, through all the tender quiet, comes a ringing sound afar.
Nothing but a doorway closing, from the cottage on the hill,
And a quiet figure sitting silent on the shaded sill.
All alone, yet not despairing — life of daily duty wrought,
Even to this erring being hath a sweet contentment brought.
Coming back to home deserted — knowing naught of him, its head —
She has labored daily, hourly, to provide her scanty bread.
Sought by all whom grief hath stricken, loved alike by old and young,
Moves she like a ministering angel, all the sad and poor among.
In her heart a chastened sorrow: on her face a smile so rare,
One would know, by intuition, she had met and conquered care.
Not in days or weeks of penance hath the touching change been wrought;
But by conscientious labor — who will say too dearly bought!
Sometimes, in the falling twilight, resting from a day of care,
Comes a tender, chastened mem'ry of a face once passing fair.

What if fate should lead him hither, tired of roaming
round the world,
Just again to view the homestead whence life's keenest
dart was hurled?
She would meet him without question — tend him, if
it so might be;
Lead him to the little hillock 'neath the once loved
willow tree.
O'er that grave of earthly promise fickle heart might
flame anew,
And, in blessed tears repenting, rise to earnest life and
true —
Not, she knew, the sweet communion of two spirits
blent in one:
Life's best chances thrown behind them, ne'er the
wrong can be undone.
But, though barrier lay between them lapse of time
could ne'er efface,
She might yet become his blessing, aided and sustained
by grace.
Giving all and asking nothing, only seeking light
Divine,
That, perchance, a face she wot of might at last with
radiance shine.

Whether in the distant future buds of promise shall
be blown,

Wreathing in their tender beauty all the scarred and riven stone —
Filling, with a soft completeness hope alone can e'er bestow,
All the quiet years for Mabel — boots not now for us to know.
Leave we her to silent musings, neither butterfly nor drone,
Clasping close a wayside floweret, on life's busy highway grown.

THE THISTLE SEED.

A PENITENT knelt at the grated door,
And the words came soft and low,
As she gathered up with a dainty hand
Her lavender dress below.

"Ah! Father," she cried, "my heart is sore;
My sins, they are many and great:
I have heeded no word of the golden rule,
And have paid fair love with hate.
I have married a man for his princely wealth,
And have given him naught but scorn;
I have wasted in riot my precious health,
And my parents are left forlorn.
I have turned aside from the beggar's plea,
Yet revelled in gold myself;
And my early friends have been naught to me,
For they had nor fame nor wealth."
She paused. "Is this all?" the Father said.
She answered, in flute-like tones:—
"O, what can be worse than to eat the flesh
And throw to the poor the bones?"

"Alas! my daughter," the Priest replied,
"You have told me of sorry deeds;
Of flowerets plucked with a ruthless hand—
But what of the deadly weeds?
What of the sins of that silvery tongue?
Hath it uttered no word but truth?
Hath it circulated no slander foul,
Rolled 'neath remorseless tooth?"
A blush on the fair cheek slowly grew,
A blush that was born of dread.
"I have done as most of my neighbors do—
I have sinned!" the sweet voice said.
No question more from the Priest within;
But his hand through the grating stole,
Holding a ripened thistle top,
In its calyx, green and whole.

"Be this your penance, my child," said he.
"Take each small seed alone,
And scatter them separate, far and near,
Till your feet are weary grown.
Then, if your task is fully done,
Hasten here by to-morrow's sun."

Wondering much at the strange command,
The lady went forth with seed in hand,
And carefully followed her weary work,
Never dreaming the task to shirk;

And many a weary sigh she sighed
Ere each small seed had been scattered wide.
Then, taking the road she had trod before,
She knelt again at the grated door.

"O, Father," she cried, "my task is done;
I have taken each seed alone.
One I have dropped at each mansion fair,
And one at each wayside stone.
I have scattered them far, and near, and wide,
And my feet, they are weary and sore beside."
She waited, with fair head bending low—
No word of praise or of blame.
"Go, gather each seed from its wayside home,
And place it from whence it came."
She stood aghast at the strange behest.
"How can I?" she said at last;
"For some are sunk in the pliant earth,
And some on the winds are cast.
It was easy to drop them, one by one,
In meadow, and lane, and street;
But to gather them all from their beds again
Would be more than a human feat."

"Alas! my child, it is even so
With far graver things than this:
The slanders dropped by a truant tongue
Are worse than the serpent's hiss.

The seeds that we scatter with careless hand
Will blossom and bloom anon;
And wide-spread branches and giant roots
From the tiniest seed are sprung.
The random word of a careless hour
Hath sped on its winged way,
And never more may be gathered up
Till the last great reckoning day.
'Tis easy to utter a sharp reproach,
Or a passing slur to fling;
But, the seed once sown, 'twere a fairy task
To gather them ere they spring.
For some have fallen by mansion fair,
And some by the wayside stone,
And hither and thither, and far and near,
By the errant wind are blown."

THE OLD MANOR HOUSE.

IT was years since I had seen it.
Ah! how old, how old I felt,
Since in sportive mood so gaily
On the latticed porch I knelt.
There the self same vines were clinging,
And the roses, fair and pale,
Mocked me with their olden beauty;
For my own began to fail.

How I called to mind the careless,
Happy days when first we met,
Ere we each began to question
How the tide of life would set.
I knew he was but human—
I well knew he was not good;
For to me he had confessed it,
As an honest lover should.

And I said, in tones that trembled,
"It is not too late to mend:

Throw the sorry past behind you —
You will find me still your friend."
What a gleam of sunny brightness
Swept across his troubled face,
Leaving of his sad misgivings
But a purifying trace.

"If I only dared to hope it!"
Came in whispers soft and low.
Shall I tell my trembling answer?
Ah, well! It was not No.
And a silence fell between us
Like the hush of eventide —
Wrapped around in happy musings,
As we sat there side by side.

Ah! how sweet the first conviction
Of a mutual passionate love!
Earth holds not so great a blessing —
Scarce, I think, can Heaven above.
We questioned not the future —
We had buried all the past;
And we loitered on in loving,
Which was all too sweet to last.

And the parting came in anguish —
As it will where love is sweet —
And he left me, little dreaming
We were never more to meet.

And the moonbeams flickered sadly,
And my heart was full of dread;
For the future was uncertain,
And we were not sworn to wed.

Ah! I curse the luck that bade me
Drive his image from my heart,
And I curse the words of madness
Telling him that we must part.
What if he were no angel!
Had I not known that before?
And I loved him—oh, I loved him
As I shall love nevermore!

They said he was beneath me;
That he did not love me true,
But held me as a stepping-stone
Dame Fortune to subdue.
And in my pride and folly,
And my agony of heart,
I decreed, in mortal anguish,
That our paths must lie apart.

I was false to woman's nature—
To my own untutored self:
I know he was no angel,
But he'd scorn to woo for pelf;

For his face was white with anguish,
And his eyes a paler blue,
And the manly nostrils quivered
As he *looked* his last adieu.

Who knows! I might have made him
All I ever dared to hope.
Ah, well! 'tis long since over,
And we all in blindness grope.
Utmost folly show our wisest:
There is madness in our sane—
And the worst of all earth's follies
Is to hope to love again.

THE WIZARD LOOM.

SHE wove a web of the daintiest dye,
So fine that scarce could the naked eye
The gossamer thread perceive.
Sitting, she worked with a feverish haste,
Snatching a morsel in hand to taste.
Living—only to weave.

A wedding garment it was she wove,
And the fabric under her fingers throve
And grew with a lightning speed.
Strange and rare was the quaint device,
And the worker was paying a fabulous price;
But that was of little heed.

No orange blossoms were trailing there;
No saintly lilies, all pure and fair—
Not even a budding rose:
Nothing a bride has been wont to wear,
But a harvest of all that is deadly, there,
On the delicate fabric grows.
A passion flower, with its crown of thorn;

A fair, proud face, with a look forlorn,
And a nightshade over all.
A 'wildering growth of poisonous flowers;
A babe that has numbered a few short hours,
Stretched on its tiny pall.

A stream dried up with the summer's heat;
A minute-glass, with its steady beat;
A serpent in act to spring;
A pond where the water stagnant lies,
And loathsome things to the surface rise;
A yoke 'neath a wedding ring.

In and out, with a subtle thread,
Heeding no passing voice or tread,
She murmurs below her breath;
And the song she sings to a weird tune—
Pausing only her thread to prune—
Is a song of blight and death:

"I will dip it deep in a deadly dye—
It shall wrap her round and round:
The dawning smile shall become a sigh,
And her laugh but a fitful sound.

"No bridal blessings for her who wove
A garland of death for me!
But a hidden thorn in her treasure trove,
And the bloom of the Upas tree.

"Her life, exhaling a poisonous sweet,
Shall wither instead of feed;
And flowers pressed by her dainty feet
Shall turn to a marsh-grown mead.

"Her mother's fount, with its hidden sweet,
Shall prove but a barren well;
And the babe she turns her in love to greet
Shall lie in a grass-grown dell.

"A serpent's voice in her ear shall sing;
And Time, with relentless tread,
Shall find but a yoke in the marriage ring;
And love of its own sweets dead."

She paused; for the last fine thread was spun:
The deadly beautiful work was done;
And a miracle came to pass.
For the air with a terrible hissing rung:
Poisonous wreathings were round her flung;
And the floor was a seething mass

Of burning sand and of marshy slime.
A rattlesnake marked her the crawling time;
And out of her reach there rose
A fountain clear, which she longed to quaff;
But close to her ear a maniac laugh
The blood in her bosom froze.

She strove to rise from the death-wrought loom—
To flee for her life from the fearful room,
Where each serpent had found a tongue.
But the marsh reeds all around her rise:
A mist is floating before her eyes;
And the Upas o'er her hung.

Slain by the curse of her own mad brain;
Blinded and faint with a gnawing pain—
She had fallen to rise no more.
The light came slow thro' a darkened room;
And, save for no trace of the wizard loom,
Life its old aspect wore.

Only a maiden, who shivered and shook,
And whose vivid color her cheek forsook,
As she thought of her horrid dream.
"Thank Heaven!" she cried, in her fear, aloud:
And on bended knee, and with head low bowed,
She dropped the delicate seam.

"No hypocritical gift of mine
Shall poison the chalice of wedded wine,
And peril my soul!" she cried.
"And for *him*—if he could, with a quiet heart,
Fashion the arrow that winged that dart,
Let him go!—with his beautiful bride."

MY LADY FAIR.

A SPRIGHTLY thing, my Lady Fair,
A creature less of earth than air —
A creature ever on the wing,
From flower to flower she'll flit and sing;
But, like the bee, she, too, can sting —
My Lady Fair.

A joyous thing, my Lady Fair,
Knowing naught of pain or care:
Dazzling all within her sphere —
Dazzling as the moonbeams clear,
And as cold sometimes, I fear —
My Lady Fair.

A fearless thing, my Lady Fair:
What is there that she would not dare?
Making all the pulses start,
Transfixing every human heart,
By her dazzling, deadly art —
My Lady Fair.

A gorgeous thing, my Lady Fair,
With her glossy purple hair,
And her shining emerald eyes,
And her royal Tyrian dyes;
But, ah me! I fear she lies—
My Lady Fair.

A lissome thing, my Lady Fair,
Noiseless gliding here and there:
Brilliant-hued as any snake,
And as *treacherous*, too, I take;
But I'd *die* for her sweet sake—
My Lady Fair.

A STORM AMONG THE SAND HILLS OF COLORADO.

COME boys! the summer night is past—
And o'er the neighboring hill,
Through golden vapors lessening fast,
The sun shines warm and still.

"Rise, lazy loiterers, from your bed!
The morning meal is done—
The Vesper hour hath come and gone,
While you your labors shun.

"The sheep are bleating in the fold;
The dogs are whining low—
Shake off the sleep that doth enfold,
For ye have far to go.

"No loitering by the wayside, boys,
Nor heed sweet sight nor sound;
But make each sturdy footstep tell—
'Tis twenty miles around."

Starting, the hardy lads awake,
And rub their bold, black eyes,
In wide amaze to find the sun
Has been the first to rise.

And soon the mug of foaming milk
With eager haste is quaffed,
And pockets stuffed with lunch to come—
While blithe the youngsters laugh.

The sheep are bleating for their glen,
The dogs are whining low—
And quick they urge their onward steps,
For they have far to go.

They know the way—for oft before
Their feet the road have trod;
As erst they kicked the blinding dust,
Or pressed the emerald sod.

The glistening dew drops gem each spray,
Nestling the flowers among—
And o'er the fragile sweet wild rose,
In diadems are strung.

All nature seems to harmonize
With boyhood's careless glee—
And soul-inspiring roundelays
Burst forth from every tree.

Seven hundred sheep they drive before,
With laughter, shout and song;
Or tell a tale of wonder wild,
As they wind their way along.

But morn now turns to brilliant day;
The boys are spent with heat;
Their tongues wag not so noisily,
And lag their weary feet.

Till looking up with sudden thought,
The elder cried aloud—
"There are the sand hills, Juan—look!
O, would you not be proud,

"If we might drive the sheep across
Instead of going round?
'Tis not four miles through here they say,
We *could*—that I'll be bound.

"What is the use of doing as
Our fathers did before?
It seems to me that fifty years
Should sure have taught them more."

Thus Jesu to the younger spake;
And he with eager eyes,
Is quite content to follow on—
And not a word denies.

They climb the hills of shifting sand;
It reaches ankle deep;
But what is that to eager boys!
Their onward way they keep.

Now shout they loud with song and glee,
Full half the way is done;
When sudden comes a lightsome breeze,
And murky grows the sun.

The fine white sand is blowing wild,
And fills the darkening air;
The boys press on with sinking hearts,
And breathe a passing prayer.

No more they watch their bleating flocks,
The sheep are running wild—
The dogs are whining—crouching low,
Beside each frightened child.

Louder and louder blows the blast,
And faster whirls the sand,
And shifts from 'neath their 'wildered feet,
A mass of sliding land.

The sand has turned to blinding clouds;
Each hill becomes a hole:
A seething, boiling, bubbling pit,
Where once was quiet knoll.

Bravely they breast the cruel storm,
But Juan's strength gives way.
Tost in a pool of seething sand,
The youngest darling lay.

The other, with his mantle drawn
Above his pallid face,
Still climbs as climbs the shifting sand,
And wins the fearful race.

The wind has wreaked its fury now,
And sings in plaintive moan,
A requiem o'er the buried dead,
Beneath the sand hills strown.

No sheep bleat round their leader now,
No faithful whine is heard—
And with sad terror of the dead,
The living heart is stirred.

He stands alone—of all the life
That lately trod the plain:
And with a wild and wondering gaze,
He looks and looks again.

The treacherous sand in quiet heaps
Of glistening silver shines—
Touched by the sunset rays that fall
Repentant through the pines.

* * * * * * * * * *

So stand we at the close of years,
  Upon life's battle plain;
Struck with sad wonder that we see
  No trace of wreck remain.

The younger ranks are filling fast
  The havoc made in ours,
And where we once have mourned our dead,
  The living gather flowers.

Fair nature strives each ghastly wound
  To close with smiling haste,
And touches with repentant hand,
  The Colorado Waste.

TIRED OUT.

TIRED eyelids dropping down
Over eyes of softest brown:
Tired fingers, pale and thin,
And the white, transparent skin.

Tired little aching feet,
Once the fleetest of the fleet:
Tired voice, so weak and low,
Once so joyous in its flow—

Murmuring: "I am tired out;
And I cannot run about,
Playing, as I used to do;
Gathering all the flowers that grew;

"Chasing butterflies and bees;
Heaping nuts and climbing trees;
Digging worms to bait my hook;
Slyly stealing to the brook.

"Setting mother's rules at naught;
Blushing rosy red if caught;
Head down dropped, through very shame,
Yet to-morrow just the same."

Tired out! Poor little one,
With whom life has scarce begun:
Slower move the pulses now,
More transparent grows the brow.

Tired out! Life's work is done.
See the tender setting sun
Lighting up the hair so brown!
Fades the cross and glows the crown.

OUT OF THE WAY.

PASSING along one summer's day,
I heard a mother—sad, sighing—say,
"I would they were all well out of the way"—
And paused to hear.
Three little children round her clung,
And the room with their clamorous crying rung,
As their little arms aloft they flung—
In baby fear.

Some molehill that like a mountain seemed—
And little brains with quick fancies teemed,
Of things they had heard, or seen, or dreamed,
And straight to her—
Who never had failed them in their need,
But ever had sought with a loving heed
Their growing bodies and brains to feed—
They fled in fear.

I gazed on the mother's patient face,
Pale and worn, and with many a trace
Which nothing on earth could ever efface—
And turned away.
But as she stooped o'er each small sprite,
Soothing their murmurs of pain and fright,
I heard her say in a whisper quite—
"No, let them stay!"

Mothers! longing in vain for rest—
With little heads pillowed on aching breast,
Wishing the birdlings out of the nest—
O, impious prayer!
Think how you'd mourn for the baby ways,
The childish prattle and merry plays,
That brightened your labor those weary days
Of toil and care!

For birds are no sooner fledged than flown,
And the mother is left to lament alone
O'er the nest that is suddenly lifeless grown;
And she longs again
For the weary years that have slipped away,
When her darlings were gathered around in play,
While she wished them grown and out of the way—
With sharpest pain.

For never was mother deserved the name,
Who would not take to herself sad blame,

And repent in loving sorrow and shame
The one dark day,
When wearied out with unwonted care,
She thoughtlessly breathed a passing prayer,
That the little cherubs who gathered there
Were out of the way.

FAILURE AND COMPENSATION.

THROUGH the day, work—and blessed rest at night;
But to us all a quiet moment comes,
When slipping off the armor donned for fight,
We stir the embers to a flickering light,
And sadly reckon up life's tangled sums.

And trooping pale-eyed from each dark recess,
Lit by a transient warmth from Memory's glow,
The ghostly children of a far-off past,
Each paler and more shadowy than the last,—
Faint phantoms of the firelight, come and go.

Hopes that we nourished in our first glad youth—
Illusions stripped by time of all their worth;
Loves that were lies, and hatred that was truth;
Fair dreams that brought us only saddest ruth—
These are the harvests of a child of earth!

And yet, with folded hands at weird dusk,
Heart-sick and weary at our daily toil—

What wonder if we crave the past again,
Calling it from the dust where it has lain;
Brushing with tender hand the gathered soil!

Cheating ourselves into the fond belief
That all was fair in the dead days of yore!
Mayhap it *was*, compared with present grief;
A weary round—long days—nights all too brief
For hearts that each new wakening must deplore.

Sadly we sit within the darkening room:
Slowly the phantoms rise and float away.
The sisters sitting at their world-wide loom,
Weave on unseen our daily, hourly doom—
Night slowly brightens into glorious day.

And into each small nook that dusky eve
Had peopled with its questionable past;
The glorious sunlight pours its living flood,
Turning to molten gold the shadowy brood:
Kindling a furnace, where we haste to cast

Our weak repinings and our backward gaze:
Recalling the untimely fate of her
Who, pausing to regret the sunny past,
And turning—into lifeless mould was cast:
Forever lost to past or present cheer.

What though the way be dark that we must tread!
Was there not One who ran the race before?
And has He not to all the faithful dead
A promise given to crown each humble head
With light and glory all unknown before?

What matter then a gloom encircled past!
Save but to brighten all our coming joy.
All toil and woe and sorrow ever past,
All thought of failure to the wide winds cast—
"Enter ye faithful in your Lord's employ."

MOHAMMED ALI AND THE APPLE.

MOHAMMED ALI sat in state—
On his brow a look of care,
His courtiers waited the nod of fate,
And whispered a fervent prayer.

For well they know who wait on kings,
How slight their hold on life—
Uncertain what each moment brings,
New favors or the knife.

On marble floor before him lay
A carpet ten feet square.
Well might the trembling courtiers pray!
For an apple ripe and rare

Lay in the centre—a tempting sight
To a stranger passing nigh,
It filled each soul with an awful fright,
Each breast with a labored sigh.

And now he spoke in measured tones,
All eyes were on him cast,
Each courtier dropped on his marrow bones,
And his breath came thick and fast.

"To-morrow, by the morning's dawn,
We march to meet the foe,
And who commands our mighty host,
'Tis time we all should know.

"Behold yon apple in its bloom!
What hand can raise it there,
And place within my royal hand,
Shall royal honors share.

"But mark my words! no foot may rest,
Save on the marble floor—
Too precious is the Persian rug,
Now use your magic lore."

With blank dismay the courtiers gazed—
Then bent them to the ground.
And each in turn, with bending form,
Clutched at the apple round.

But one remained, of dwarfish size,
Mohammed's brother he.
And as he bent him to the prize,
All faces laughed to see.

When calmly stooping to the rug,
He rolled it up and smiled;
While every face, save Ali's own,
Wore look of wonder wild.

"Behold your chief!" Mohammed cried,
"All worthy to control.
For wit is more than brutal strength,
And bulk gives place to soul."

AM I GLAD?

AM I glad that I married you still, dear love,
After years of toil and care—
Years that have faded the rose of youth,
And whitened my once brown hair?

Am I glad that I married my own true love—
With the fearless hazel eyes,
And the hand with the honest, manly grasp,
And the mouth that never lies?

Do I fret and pine because we are poor,
And sigh for my maiden name,
Because we have toiled and striven so long
For the comfort that never came?

Ah! little you know my heart, dear love,
After years of married life,
If you think I could ever have borne to be
Another man's petted wife.

My one time lover, over the way,
May be richer in stocks and gold,
But I should have carried a sorrowing heart,
Though living in wealth untold.

For I should have mourned the gladsome light
Of the face I have loved so well.
And instead of a welcome, a mocking, note
Would have rung in the marriage bell.

I honor you more for the patient pain
That has lain in your eyes so brown;
And I love you far more than I ever could love
The wealthiest man in town.

Think what we've been to each other, love,
Through all our trouble and pain!
Ah! yes, despite of all we have borne,
I'd marry you over again.

For love is a passion that never dies,
A flame that must ever burn,
And when care o'ertaketh hearts that are true,
They only the closer turn.

Yes, I'd marry you over again, dear love,
If life were ten times as long,
Then never wound your own heart again,
Or *mine*, with a doubt so wrong.

WELCOME TO WINTER.

BLOW, blow! ye stormy Winter winds,
Let loose each bitter blast!
What power to sadden once ye had,
That power is long since past.

In early youth we welcome Spring;
Its flower, sweet laden air,
Its emerald turf, quick shooting plants,
And glorious promise fair.

Then but to live is to be blest!
Our future shines so fair,
And earth and heaven seem all in league
To banish every care.

But riper years bring calmer hearts.
We do not linger now
On moonlight nights as once of old,
With softly brooding brow.

Our die is cast! Our tale is told!
And falling back amain,
We leave to those of tenderer years,
What scarce can charm again.

The bare, brown tree, the shrivelled leaf,
The hard, frost-bitten ground,
Accord far better with our mood,
And make our pulses bound,

All eager for the week day strife;
The homely loving task,
Which brings a blessing of its own:
This now is all we ask.

And when the daily round is o'er,
And twilight reigns supreme,
And wearied nature claims repose,
We too may have our dream.

Not of a future all too fair
To blossom on this earth,
But looking far beyond this realm,
And past the glowing hearth—

We see a shining home afar,
Where Spring reigns evermore,
And balmiest breezes blow about
Our Father s open door.

SONG.

NAY, CROWN ME NOT.

NAY, crown me not with roses!
They should deck a younger brow,
And would only shame the paleness
That has crept about me now.

When a heart has lived its life out,
Plant no flowerets near its grave.
Life's tide should close above it,
Leaving it beneath the wave.

Nay! mock me not with roses,
Blushing roses in their bloom,
Lest their sweets betray my secret,
And strange eyes should read my doom.

And if I must, like others,
Choose a wreath to bind my hair,
Then give me of the passion vine!
Its flowers I well may wear.

Its glorious purple blossom,
Blent of mingled light and shade,
Breathes gloom as well as gladness,
And seems all for mourners made.

Then crown me not with roses!
They should deck a fairer brow,
And would only shame the grayness
That has gathered round me now.

A BARN YARD ROW.

OOKING out of my window one brisk
Autumn day,
Where a lot of staid cattle were munching
their hay—
All quiet as lambs—
A testy old ox who was standing near by,
Looked so temptingly fat that a passing gad fly
Lit on one of his hams.

Up flew the old fellow's hind feet in a rage,
Regardless of all that's expected of age,
And sad to relate—
Instead of requiting the venomous fly,
Came down on a cow who was lying near by,
Nearly crushing her pate.

She rose in a fury, not stopping to ask
Who thus had disturbed her delectable task,
But, lowering her horn,

She rushed at her neighbor, a frisky young mule,
As full of his play as a boy out of school,
Who left eating his corn.

And then such a hubbub as went round the yard,
'Twere worthy the pen of a loftier bard.
How I laughed but to look!
Each kicking his neighbor without knowing why,
Till the spirit was caught by the pigs in the sty—
And the very yard shook.

Now I leave it to all who observe as they go,
If one half of the fights in this region below,
Do not come by mere chance.
'Tis just in this way that most squabbles begin—
Somebody kicks some one else on the shin,
Who straight 'gins to prance.

And each looker on, never asking the why,
Gives his neighbor a punch in the rib or the eye,
Till the yard's in a row.
The moral is plain—"Never kick till you're spurred."
One malcontent leavens the whole of the herd,
Be it human or cow.

THE MISTLETOE.

O TREE of sacred mystery! O, far-famed mistletoe!
What dire misdeed, or ruthless crime hath laid thy glories low!
Once queen in storied eastern clime, so stately and so fair,
The birds have built them in thy boughs, and sung their anthems there.

Alas! in evil hour there came a blinded, furious band,
And seeing thee in all thy pride, and glorious beauty stand—
"What tree more fit," they mocking cry, "than this our mistletoe
For Israel's King;" and falls the axe with mighty ringing blow.

The Saviour's cross from thy fair trunk was destined to be made,
And from that hour, by slow degrees, thy glories 'gan to fade.

Men wondered—as thy goodly boughs grew less and
less each day,
And leaves once bright and glossy green, were turned
to greenish gray.

E'en as they gazed, each mighty tree seemed slow to
melt away,
And in its place a feathery mass, part greenish and
part gray,
Filled all the air, and clustering clung to every for-
est tree.
Oh! never more on this doomed earth the mistletoe
shall be.

A parasite for ever more, a wanderer, waif and stray,
A shadow of thy former self, thy glories passed away,
Men pass thee with a shuddering sigh: thy tendrils
light as floss
Are cursed: for thou suppliedst the wood that carved
the Saviour's cross.

And never more thy fated boughs shall grace the chan-
cel nave;
Or o'er dim aisle and pillared wall, thy shadowy beau-
ties wave.
Once queen of all the forest round, the fairest, stateliest
tree,
Accursed for ever and for aye, the mistletoe shall be.

FOLDED HANDS.

BUSY hands at last are folden,
Hands that rested not in life,
Knocking at the portals golden,
Finished now their earthly strife.
No one praised their rounded beauty,
None their graceful outline kissed,
While onearth those hands were busied,
Yet will they be sorely missed.

Missed by all who dwelt beside them,
For the tender, loving touch,
Which, when words are all unheeded,
Bring the comfort needed much.
Tireless in their daily duties,
Mindful of the coming night,
When no longer man may labor;
Labored these with all their might.
Angels shall confess their beauties,
Clothing them in raiment white.

MY HAMMOCK.

ALL day long in my hammock I swing,
And bethink me of every conceivable thing.
Forgetting the earth with its troubles and cares,
Ignoring the world with its pitfalls and snares.
Looking up to the sky in its heavenly blue,
Then down on the turf in its emerald hue.
Then far, far away to the bright glancing river,
Where sparkle the sunbeams, and long shadows quiver,
Till I well nigh lose sight of the landscape so fair,
And imagine myself but a sprite of the air.

How I dive to the depths of the green ocean wave,
And roam through in fancy some coral girt cave!
I sport with the mermaids so slender and fair,
And deck with the seaweed their long floating hair.
Then anon I withdraw from their wildering charms,
Unwind from about me the clasp of white arms,
While they deluge me o'er with a shower of spray,
And their sweet siren tongues would fain urge me to stay.
I turn but to wave them a parting adieu,
As the last head is sinking 'neath old ocean's blue.

Then away, far away to some rock begirt isle,
Where alone 'mid the grandeur the day god must smile:
Where rocks gray with ages hurl back his fierce rays,
And alone old King Ocean wears out the long days.
Now howling in fury, now sinking to rest,
As calm as a babe on the motionless breast—
Now dashing in ripples the white beach along,
Then dying away in a murmuring song.
I pick the bright pebbles that strew the long beach,
And away, far away again, far out of reach.

Away, far away to the limitless blue,
To the gate of the Paradise made for the few.
The bright, shining portals in fancy I see,
And wonder if ever they'll open for *me*.
Then down, down again to this hoary old earth,
Such a jumble of misery, pleasure and mirth,
Where the smiles hardly balance the tears of the heart,
And each little man plays his own little part.
Alas! the awakening brings *mine* back to me:
'Tis only, alas, in my hammock I'm free.

SHE CAME FROM HEAVEN.

WHILE sitting at my work one day,
On little socks intent,
'Twas thus I heard my bonny boys,
As o'er their books they bent.

Said Fred, the elder, in a tone
Of infantine reproof,
"Where are your manners, baddest boy?"
And drew himself aloof.

"Where did you come from, anyhow,
I'd really like to know?"
Quoth Jack in his stentorian tones,
"From mother's garden row."

"And where did mother come from?" cried
My venturesome first born,
As glad and free his laugh rang out
Upon the summer's morn.

With quick, shy glance of fullest love,
Then dropping his bright head,
In silvery tones Jack's answer came,
"She came from Heaven," he said.

O, blessed love! O, childish faith!
May it be ever given,
Through life to deem thy choicest gifts,
Are from the hand of Heaven!

MY LITTLE QUEEN.

SWAYING to and fro with folded hands,
In idle mood my darling stands.
Fair head hanging low, and dreamy air,
A witch she is, though passing fair.
"Mamma, dear," she says, "I'll be a Queen,
The happiest one was ever seen."
And sinking in her rocking chair,
She poses with a royal air.

* * * * * * *

Some ten years pass away; the little queen
Would still be one, though other sort I ween,
From that she coveted in childish days:
Fair aspirant now for man's love and praise.
Not now she reaches after golden crown,
And rules a kingdom by her royal frown;
But rosy lips and soft beseeching eyes,
Show that her game in other pasture lies.

Come, love! and crown her with immortal bays,
And so content her with sweet love and praise,
Till her small realm a very kingdom seem,
And life be all one long and happy dream.

THREE PHASES.

I SAW her first when the lilies of youth
Bloomed graceful and pure and pale;
Her brow unwrit by a single care,
Too bright for this mortal vale.
She wearied, she said, of a Sabbath calm,
And longed for the week day strife.
I could but smile at the daring wish:
I, who had lived my life.

I saw her next when the roses of love
Had tinged with a blushing pride
Her lily cheek—but beneath the rose
The traces of thorns I spied.
And yet she would taste, she smiling said,
Of all that the world could bring,
And for the sake of life's varied lore,
Could bear with its sharpest sting.

When I saw her last, both lily and rose
With the passing of years had fled.
Her eye was dimmed with the falling of tears,
And vigor and hope were dead.

"I long for rest," was her wailing cry,
"Life is a cruel thorn,
And yet were my heart but to bleed again,
Again I would have it born."

I have thought at times, with an aching heart,
Of the wish of my early youth,
When I fain would have bartered peace for strife,
And the crimson of passion for truth.
I have gathered the rose of a glowing love,
Till only the thorn remains,
Yet rather the rose with its living hues,
Than the lily without its stains.

We are born for passion, and fashioned for strife.
Each plant in its wondrous birth,
Through danger and darkness must struggle up
To the glorified light of earth.
Oh, who would linger a barren root,
For fear that its leaves might fade!
Far rather to scorch in the glowing sun,
Than mould in the torpid shade.

THE MAGNOLIA.

LET others sing the far-famed rose,
Or stately lily fair to see!
But, oh! for one long, deep-drawn breath
In thy damp wilds, Magnolia Tree!

The long June days are all too short
To take thy spicy fragrance in:
So pure, and meek, and starry-eyed,
We look, and disbelieve in sin.

Fenced round by no unseemly thorns,
Thou yet hast bastions of thine own.
And he who fain would win and wear,
Must scorn the dainty stepping stone,

And storm thee in thy dark morass.
Half veiled in leaves of glossiest green,
Thy creamy buds peep out abashed—
No fairer flower the world hath seen!

Just so, my love! In piquant grace
She stands, and all the world may see:
But half in shade, her soulful face
Is kept in full, for only me.

Her heart is hedged in maiden pride,
And only he who woos her well,
Shall stand unchidden at her side,
And all her inmost sweetness tell.

I waded deep in dankest dell,
I scorned the mire and spurned the dew:
And now in sweets no tongue can tell,
I steep my being through and through.

O, fair Magnolia! *Fairer* love!
Who dost the glare of noonday shun,
Like all earth's richest gifts to man,
Thou must be *sought* ere fairly won.

SONG.

I PRAY THEE DROP.

I PRAY thee drop that sad, sad strain,
And glad us with a merrier note.
You say this world is full of pain,
That shadows through each sunbeam float.

What wonder if the world look dark
To him who shuts God's gladness out!
The sun still shines, if only we
Dare turn our earth-bound eyes about.

Throw doors and windows open wide:
Let in the glorious orb of day—
For darkling motes through sunbeams glide,
When seen through loopholes on the stray.

Then drop, I pray, that mournful strain,
And glad us with a merrier note.
Throw wide the soul's fair doors again,
Till new life on each sunbeam float.

SHE WORE A CLOUD.

SHE wore a cloud, as they call it now,
O, wonderful fleecy sheen!
No whit more pure than her marble brow,
And her eyes shone out between,
Like two twin stars from Heaven's own sphere,
Which a cloud rift lets be seen.

The moon poured down her silver light
In a flood of radiance rare,
Glorifying that summer night,
And making the fair more fair,
Till I could have worshipped her beauty bright,
And knelt to her, then and there.

But my beautiful cloud with the moon went in,
And my vision faded quite,
For I saw the cloud again next day,

Without the soft moonlight:
And the starry eyes, though pretty enough,
Had lost their angelic light.

The marble brow, though marble still,
Was human enough by day;
And I thought with amaze of the moonlit night,
And things I had meant to say:
And so in the broad, unvarnished light,
My vision faded away.

And many a time in after life,
When a *clouded* face I've seen,
I've thought with what mischief the moon is rife,
And of that glorious sheen,
Which might have made, or marred my life,
Had daylight not come between.

UNREST.

OUT into the silent night, with heavy thoughts oppresst,
I gaze upon the quiet skies, and seek to know their rest,
For never more my heart shall find its home upon thy breast.

As some frail vine without support, its tendrils blind must fling,
And seeks in vain a sturdy stem round which to climb and cling;
And failing, doubles on itself in many a twisting ring—

So my sad heart of thee bereft—my love's rich stream is stayed;
And bursting o'er its olden banks, looks wide-eyed and afraid,
To see the ruthless havoc there on ancient landmarks made.

Bear with me, radiant, tender stars! nor mock my
woful plight!
Thou'st known me in far different moods, when on a
happier night,
Dear eyes, now dead, have looked with me upon thy
tender light.

Dead, did I say? Ah, would they *were*! nor only
dead to *me*:
Then might I, in thy pitying light, again their radiance
see,
And fancy that my spirit love held nightly tryst with
me.

But, no! There is a death more drear, with which the
world is rife,
And some were born to drink the gall, and drain the
dregs of life.
O, give me of thy quiet, stars! and end the unequal
strife.

GO THOU THY WAY.

"But go thou thy way till the end be."—Daniel, 12th chap. 13th ver

GO thou thy way until the end shall be;
Nor seek profane to pierce life's mystery.
'Twas God's infinite wisdom placed us here,
Wait we with patience for the mists to clear.
He watchful broods o'er all—the bond and free—
Go thou thy way until the end shall be.

Go thou thy way, nor question what befall:
'Tis few may read the hand-write on the wall.
In trusting meekness, and in loving fear,
Go live the life our Saviour led while here:
Praying through joy or woe, *His* hand to see.
Go thou thy way until the end shall be.

Go thou thy way with ever thankful heart,
Though with thy choicest treasures called to part,
Remembering when grief thy soul appalls,
There must be sunlight where a shadow falls.
"Who loveth—leaveth all for sake of me."
Go thou thy way until the end shall be.

Go thou thy way, nor seek nor care to know,
Why heavenly wisdom orders thus and so.
No human hand may lift time's shadowy vail,
And if it could, what heart that would not quail
At sight of all that is, and is to be!
Go thou thy way until the end shall be.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 015 863 409 0